

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814



May 26, 1998

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE NO. I-34-98

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: CHILD WELFARE WAIVER
DEMONSTRATION PROJECT KINSHIP
PERMANENCE COMPONENT

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

- ☐ State Law Change
- ☐ Federal Law or Regulation Change
- ☐ Court Order or Settlement Agreement
- ☐ Clarification Requested by One or More Counties
- ☒ Initiated by CDSS

REFERENCE: CHILD WELFARE WAIVER DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) is pleased to announce the solicitation of proposals for the **Kinship Permanence Component** under the **Title IV-E Child Welfare Waiver Demonstration Project**. The purpose of this letter is to provide counties with a copy of the Invitation to Counties which describes the process counties should follow in submitting county proposals for consideration by the CDSS.

The Kinship Permanence Component of the demonstration project will allow selected counties to continue federal foster care payments on behalf of specified adolescent children living in long-term, stable, relative placements after guardianship is established and dependency is dismissed. As a result, participating counties will be able to expand county options which promote permanency. (See enclosed California's Title IV-E Child Welfare Waiver Demonstration Project Description for a more detailed overview of this component.)

The CDSS will approve a maximum of 10 proposals for participation in the Kinship Permanence Component. In selecting county proposals, the CDSS will evaluate the quality of the projects proposed as well as geographic and evaluative considerations. Any county selected will be required to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the CDSS governing the project and be willing to participate in the State evaluation.

County proposals must clearly describe the county's plan and illustrate the ability of the county to implement an effective program that is cost neutral to both the State and federal governments. All proposals must be submitted by the county welfare agency and address the criteria described in the enclosed Invitation to Counties. **County proposals must be submitted by July 31, 1998.**

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To assist counties in the development of proposals, **the CDSS has scheduled a conference call to be held on June 22, 1998.** During this call, CDSS staff will be available to answer questions from counties concerning the preparation of their proposal for the Kinship Permanence Component. In addition, the CDSS has enclosed a County Proposal Review Checklist which may be used by counties to ensure that any proposals developed contain all required information.

To aid the CDSS in preparing for this call, the CDSS would like to request that counties fax any questions regarding this Invitation by June 15, 1998, to the attention of Sheilah Dupuy at (916) 324-9539. Questions may also be directed via e-mail to sdupuy@dss.ca.gov.

As a reminder to counties, the CDSS sent a formal request to the federal Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to reconsider the Terms and Conditions imposed on California with respect to age limitations in the Kinship Permanence Component. It was our hope that DHHS would approve our request thereby enabling counties to serve additional children under this component. Unfortunately, to date the CDSS has been unable to reach a mutually acceptable agreement with DHHS regarding this extension request. In the event CDSS is able to reach agreement with DHHS in the future, the CDSS will evaluate at that time how best to incorporate the proposed modifications into California's project.

Please be aware that a copy of this letter and the enclosed Invitation has also been sent to the individual(s) identified by your county as the contact person(s) for your county for this component. This has been done to maximize the time your county has to complete its proposal. If your county has not identified a contact person and is interested in this component or has changed your contact, please call Janet McKinley-Garland at (916) 322-5366 and let her know who your contact person will be. This will ensure that the CDSS can provide any subsequent material regarding this component directly to that individual as well as yourself.

Thank you for your interest in this exciting project. If you have any questions regarding this letter or the enclosed Invitation to Counties, please contact Judy Colbert or Sheilah Dupuy at (916) 323-1263.

Sincerely,


MARJORIE KELLY
Deputy Director
Children and Family Services Division

Enclosures

c: CWDA

Invitation to Counties

Kinship Permanence Component

California Granted Waiver

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) was the eighth state to receive a Title IV-E Child Welfare Waiver Demonstration Project from the federal Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) on August 19, 1997. This is an unprecedented opportunity for CDSS and California counties to test innovative program improvements as this is the first time DHHS has been given the authority to waive portions of Title IV-E of the Social Security Act.

The CDSS has been approved to pilot three components under the demonstration project.

- ★ The Kinship Permanence Component will allow specified adolescent children living in long-term, stable, relative placements to continue receiving a federal foster care payment after guardianship is established and dependency is dismissed.
- ★ The Extended Voluntary Placement Component will extend federal funding for voluntary placements from six to 12 months under specified conditions.
- ★ The Intensive Services Component will permit use of Title IV-E funds for innovative service provision in specified conditions.

CDSS Invites Proposals

The CDSS is now soliciting county proposals from those counties interested in participating in the **Kinship Permanence Component**.
Proposals must be received by July 31, 1998.

Note: Random Assignment

The CDSS originally proposed a quasi-experimental evaluation methodology utilizing comparison county and historical data to evaluate the effectiveness of the demonstration project. After negotiations with DHHS, CDSS has been required to use a random assignment methodology for the Kinship Permanence Component. Please see "Reporting/Evaluation Requirements" section in these instructions for more information on random assignment.

Administrative Costs

While maintenance costs and certain administrative costs associated with this project must be cost neutral to the State and federal governments, there are some costs that are not included in the cost neutrality calculation and will

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be borne by the federal, State, and participant county governments such as travel associated with attendance at consortia meetings.

The State and federal governments will fund approximately \$2.8 million dollars for the federally mandated, third party evaluation. In addition, the State and federal governments are bearing the costs of State level administrative staff necessary to implement, monitor, and evaluate the project.

The counties which choose to participate in this demonstration project may bear some increased costs associated with staff time for evaluation purposes, staff time to provide and attend training, etc. While some or possibly all of these costs may be claimable under Title IV-E administrative or training funds or under the demonstration project itself, there may be some increased county costs associated with implementation of this project. Counties should indicate their awareness of this and willingness to assume these costs in their county proposals.

Development Costs

Costs for development of county proposals may be eligible for reimbursement at a rate of 50 percent federal funds for those counties selected to participate. The CDSS is currently working with the federal government to clarify issues regarding claiming of development costs. Claiming instructions will follow in a subsequent County Fiscal Letter.

Number of Participant Counties/Cases

Six of the participant counties for the **Kinship Permanence Component** are identified in statute (Welfare and Institutions Code 11465.5) and are: Alameda, Contra Costa, Sacramento, Solano,

Tulare, and Yuba Counties. Participation on the part of those counties named in statute is voluntary. The CDSS may approve a maximum of ten counties to participate in the **Kinship Permanence Component**.

The federal Terms and Conditions limit the number of participant children statewide to approximately 1400 in the first year of the project. All cases will be randomly assigned to either an experimental or control group in a 5:3 ratio so that the total maximum number of children participating in the first year will be approximately 1400 in the experimental group and 840 in the control group. Counties must be able to demonstrate that they have a sufficient number of cases to include in the control group for comparison.

PROPOSAL PREPARATION/TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

Counties should note the following technical requirements:

- ▶ **Late proposals will not be considered.**
Postmarks are not acceptable in lieu of receipt by CDSS.
- ▶ Faxes of county proposals will not be accepted.
- ▶ All proposals must be submitted on standard white paper, 8 ½ x 11 inches, with each page clearly, consecutively numbered (including all attachments).
- ▶ Counties are also requested to submit an electronic version of their proposals in Word or an ASCII format.

- ▶ While there is no page limit, counties are encouraged to be clear and concise and limit proposal contents to only that which is necessary to explain the details of the proposal.
- ▶ An original and 5 copies of the proposal must be submitted.
- ▶ A one-page summary of the county proposal and a table of contents must be included with the proposal.
- ▶ The county proposal must include a completed cover sheet. (Attachment A)
- ▶ The county proposal must include an organization chart of those responsible for administration of the county project.

County proposals that meet the above "Preparation/Technical Requirements" will receive a "yes" rating for each item. Any "no" rating will result in the deduction of two points for each "no" rating.

PROPOSAL CONTENT REQUIREMENTS

Be sure to read and fully understand the enclosed copy of California's Title IV-E Child Welfare Waiver Project Description.

County proposals must clearly describe how their proposed demonstration project meets the requirements of these instructions and the enclosed Title IV-E Child Welfare Waiver Demonstration Project Description.

County proposals must clearly illustrate the ability of the county to implement an effective program that is cost neutral to both the State and federal governments.

In selecting county proposals, the CDSS will consider the quality of the projects within project parameters described in this document. The CDSS will also take into account factors such as whether the geographic balance is representative of the State or regions, ie., northern v. southern counties, the demographics of participating counties and whether there is a balance of urban and rural counties.

Consideration will also be given to evaluation requirements, such as the number of cases available for random assignment, and other criteria identified by DHHS.

County Proposal Narrative

The county proposal narrative must provide the overall "big picture" of the proposed project for the full five years of the demonstration and include each of the section components delineated below. It is recommended that the county utilize the "Proposal Review Form Checklist" (Attachment B) to ensure that they have responded fully to each component. Furthermore, all components should be addressed in the order described in this Invitation and contain each of the elements described therein.

If a county has submitted proposals for more than one component, counties are advised that each participant child cannot participate in more than one component. Additionally, counties which have submitted proposals under the Extended Voluntary or Intensive Services components which compliment this proposal should describe how the proposals relate to each other.

Kinship Care Agreement

County proposals must indicate that the county will utilize a Kinship Care Agreement to be jointly developed by CDSS and participant counties. The new agreement will delineate relative and

county responsibilities. Each county must indicate in their proposal that they will use the new form and that the form will reflect the following items:

- ▶ A clear statement that there will be no continued court or child welfare services agency involvement in the case (e.g. dependency is dismissed, no social worker assigned to family, no social worker visits, etc.) unless the child is eligible for and elects to participate in the Independent Living Program (ILP).
- ▶ A clear explanation of any changes in grant amount (i.e., loss of specialized care or clothing allowance).
- ▶ A brief summary of the pilot project.
- ▶ An explanation of the significance of the relative moving out-of-county or out-of-state.
- ▶ A clear statement as to the relatives' responsibilities to inform the county of any changes in circumstances, including a decision to move or terminate the guardianship.
- ▶ An explanation of the relative/child's eligibility for ILP Services upon the child's sixteenth birthday.
- ▶ A clear statement that relatives maintain the option of adopting the child at any point during the pilot project.
- ▶ Provision for continued sibling visitations when siblings are not placed together.
- ▶ An explanation of how the relative provider can contact the county if in need of child welfare services.

The proposal shall address the above nine items, each of which will be worth five points for a maximum of 45 points.

Participant Selection Criteria

County proposals must provide that children and families selected to participate must meet, at a minimum, the following criteria:

- ▶ Participation in the project will be limited to children who are 13 years of age or older in the first year. Note: All children who enter the project in subsequent years must age out of the system prior to the termination of the demonstration project. As such, in the second year of the project, only youth 14 and older will be considered and in the third year, only youth 15 and older will be considered.
- ▶ The court has decided that the child will not be adopted or has a significant parental relationship that precludes termination of parental rights.
- ▶ The family and child are willing to participate in the project.
- ▶ The child has been in placement for at least one year following the initial permanency planning hearing and has been placed with this relative for at least one year following a permanency planning hearing.
- ▶ The child has no ongoing needs beyond basic necessities or no longer requires funding for child welfare services (i.e., therapy is paid through insurance).
- ▶ The relative provider is able to use or is utilizing community resources to meet the needs of the child and has agreed to continue maintaining those services (i.e., community

counseling center, nurse practitioners, mental health department).

- ▶ The child and relative provider have had a written assessment prepared documenting the appropriateness of their participation in this project.
- ▶ The child and relative provider have had a guardianship or custody home study completed, citing the best interests of the child and that there are no protection issues regarding the care of the child.
- ▶ The relative provider is capable of taking care of the child, has planned for a successor guardianship in case of their inability to care for the child, and can meet the child's needs (i.e., mental health, educational).
- ▶ Participation will be limited only to children who are eligible under Title IV-E for participation in the Kinship Permanence Component.

Each county proposal must also indicate an estimation of the number of children the county expects will participate in this component.

At a minimum, the proposal must specifically address the ten bulleted items above, each of which will be worth five points for a maximum of 50 points.

Participant Selection Process

Each county will be required to indicate the process they will use to identify children who are eligible for participation in the project. The selection process must provide that any child chosen to participate in the project will be approved by a county second level supervisor,

administrative review board, or the equivalent prior to entry into the demonstration project.

Each county will receive up to 20 points for establishing an adequate selection process.

Independent Living Program (ILP)

County proposals must clearly indicate that upon turning 16, children participating in this pilot will be eligible to the ILP Program. In addition to inclusion of this fact on the Kinship Care Agreement, the proposal must indicate the procedures whereby the county will notify the relative provider and child of this eligibility within one year of the child's 16th birthday. The proposal must also indicate that participation in ILP is entirely voluntary on the part of the relative and child. County proposals must document how the county will provide ILP services to a child if the relative provider lives outside the participating county.

County proposals which meet the criterion for ILP Services shall receive up to 15 points.

Administrative Structure & Capability

This narrative section must identify and describe adequate administrative support structures for implementation and ongoing maintenance of this project. County proposals must document how counties will utilize staffing and support structures to accomplish the administration of this project. Specifically, counties must address the following:

- ▶ Describe the county's capability and resources for ensuring timely start-up and implementation.
- ▶ Describe county/staff experience and ability to implement the proposed project. Please

include an organization chart and staffing plan as attachments.

Counties selected to participate in the Kinship Permanence Component must agree to:

- ▶ Track, collect and maintain the cost and service data on each child participating in the demonstration.
- ▶ Participate with the State's evaluator and identify specific staff to be involved in the evaluation and data collection processes.

County proposals will be given up to 20 points for plans which demonstrate adequate staffing and administrative support structures. Each bulleted item will be worth five points.

Eligibility Determinations

County proposals must indicate that the county will make annual redeterminations of eligibility to the demonstration project in accordance with the Eligibility and Assistance Standards Manual.

County proposals which meet the mandatory criterion for annual eligibility determinations shall receive a "yes" rating. Counties which fail to meet this section criterion will not be eligible to participate in the demonstration project.

Health Provision(s)

Children participating in this component may continue to receive Medi-Cal benefits; the children will continue to be eligible for a federal foster care payment with its corresponding categorical linkage to Medi-Cal. County proposals must indicate that the county will ensure that foster children participating in this demonstration will continue to receive Medi-Cal benefits or that the child's medical needs will be met through some other acceptable method such as continuing

coverage by the parent or relative's private health plan.

County proposals which meet the mandatory criterion for health provision shall receive a "yes" rating. Counties which fail to meet this criterion will not be eligible to participate in the demonstration project.

Reporting/Evaluation Requirements

County proposals must indicate that the county is willing to comply with reporting requirements to be developed by CDSS. At a minimum, monthly tracking of the individual participant children will be necessary in order to perform the evaluation and ensure cost neutrality.

Proposals must also indicate that the county will comply with each of the following evaluation requirements.

- ▶ Counties must determine eligibility for children and families considered for participation in the Kinship Permanence Component using existing eligibility criteria and other criteria provided by the State.
- ▶ Counties must be willing to assist evaluators in establishing feasible data collection and storage strategies for data collected during eligibility determination.
- ▶ Counties must provide evaluators with the names, case numbers, telephone numbers, addresses of children and families which are determined to be eligible for participation in the Demonstration Project as part of either the experimental or control groups.
- ▶ Once eligibility is established by counties, random assignment of children to either the Kinship Permanence experimental or control group will be done by the evaluation team.

Participating counties must abide by and maintain the random assignment.

- ▶ At the study onset, the experimental group will continue to receive a federal foster care payment after guardianship is established and dependency is dismissed. The control group however, will remain in foster care with dependency status.
- ▶ County staff must use the CWS/CMS database for entry of information about eligible cases including: a child's dependency status, the dates of entry and exit from care, a child's placement status, placements of siblings, reunification and re-entries to foster care, and official reports of child maltreatment. The CWS/CMS system may be used to access additional information from case records.
- ▶ Counties must appoint an evaluation coordinator to serve as a liaison with the evaluators and assist evaluators in obtaining names of participants, relevant client data, and access to client and staff participants.
- ▶ Counties must contact the juvenile court judge in their respective county in order to obtain a blanket consent for dependent children participation in the evaluation.
- ▶ Counties must facilitate access for interviews with county staff, children and relative providers who are involved with the Kinship Permanence Component by providing introductory letters or phone calls for the evaluation contractor.
- ▶ Counties must be willing to cooperate with the evaluation research team to ensure access to participating clients, to documentation related to those clients, and to county social service staff. The evaluators will be following children for a minimum of two years after entry into the study. Evaluators will interview randomly selected youth and relative providers participating in the waiver component or serving as controls at the time they enter and exit the study. These same relative providers will be interviewed as well at one year after entry into the study.
- ▶ Of the approximately 1400 children served, the evaluation contractor will select 600 families (375 experimentals and 225 controls) to administer telephone interviews of both the children and the relative providers.
- ▶ County program managers and field staff must be available for on-site meetings within the first three months of project implementation and thereafter on a quarterly basis. These meetings will be coordinated with the quarterly consortia meetings indicated by the State.
- ▶ Counties must be willing to provide timely feedback on draft reports prepared by the evaluators.

County proposals which meet the above bulleted items for reporting/evaluation requirements will receive a "yes" rating. Any "no" rating will result in the deduction of two points for each "no" rating.

Conference Call-County Questions

A conference call will be held on June 22, 1998, at 10:00 a.m. in order to give counties the opportunity to ask questions concerning their proposals. The phone number for the conference call is (916) 657-4106.

This call will give counties the opportunity to ask questions concerning these instructions and the preparation of their proposals. To enable the CDSS to more adequately prepare for this call, counties should fax any questions no later than June 15, 1998, to the attention of Sheilah Dupuy at the number below. Questions may also be directed via e-mail to sdupuy@dss.ca.gov.

Counties should direct questions and proposals to:

Sheilah Dupuy

CDSS-Foster Care Branch
744 P Street, M.S. 19-74
Sacramento, California 95814
(916)323-1263
(916)324-9539 (FAX)
e-mail sdupuy@dss.ca.gov

**PROPOSAL COVER SHEET
KINSHIP PERMANENCE COMPONENT**

COUNTY: _____

AGENCY NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CONTACT PERSON: _____ **PHONE:** (____) _____

TITLE: _____ **E-MAIL:** _____

FAX #: _____

Participant County Identified in Statute

☐ Yes

☐ No

County has Submitted Proposals for Other Components of the Waiver Demonstration

☐ Yes If so, which components? _____

☐ No

**Total Number of Children County Expects to Participate in Kinship Permanence
Component (Include both Experimental and Control Children):** _____

Signature of Authorizing Official:

Signature

Title

Date

**PROPOSAL REVIEW FORM CHECKLIST
KINSHIP PERMANENCE COMPONENT**

The items below are required to be submitted as part of the application. Proposals should be assembled in the order delineated below.

- ____ 1. PROPOSAL COVER SHEET
- ____ 2. PROPOSAL REVIEW CHECKLIST
- ____ 3. TABLE OF CONTENTS
- ____ 4. ONE PAGE SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL
- ____ 5. PROPOSAL CONTENT REQUIREMENTS
- ____ Kinship Care Agreement
- ____ Participant Selection Criteria
- ____ Participant Selection Process
- ____ Independent Living Program
- ____ Administrative Structure and Capability
- ____ Eligibility Determinations
- ____ Health Provisions
- ____ Reporting/Evaluation Requirements
- ____ 6. ELECTRONIC VERSION OF PROPOSAL
- ____ 7. ORGANIZATION CHART
- ____ 8. ORIGINAL AND FIVE COPIES

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814



CALIFORNIA'S
TITLE IV-E CHILD WELFARE WAIVER
DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

as approved by the

Department of Health and Human Services

on August 19, 1997

I. OVERVIEW

California's Child Welfare Waiver Demonstration Project was approved by the federal Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) on August 19, 1997, permitting implementation of three pilot projects serving approximately four thousand foster children in up to 32 counties or locations over the next five years. Key sections of federal and State statute which currently limit the use of foster care funds will be waived, allowing the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and participant counties to use available dollars with the flexibility needed to test innovative and more effective methods of providing child welfare services (CWS).

The three project components are as follows:

- ★ The Extended Voluntary Placement Component will extend federal funding for voluntary placements from six to 12 months under specified conditions.
- ★ The Kinship Permanence Component will allow specified adolescent children living in long-term, stable, relative placements to continue receiving a federal foster care payment after guardianship is established and dependency is dismissed.
- ★ The Intensive Services Component will permit use of Title IV-E funds for innovative service provision in specified conditions.

The CDSS anticipates that the Demonstration Project will eliminate the need for foster placements in some cases, shorten stays in out-of-home care, reduce court interventions and provide permanence for more children among other benefits.

The DHHS is requiring an independent, third party evaluation. The mandated evaluation will utilize both experimental and quasi-experimental methodologies in order to conduct outcome, process, and cost-benefit/cost neutrality analyses.

II. BACKGROUND

The current out-of-home foster care system was developed in response to the passage of Public Law (PL) 96-272 in 1980. PL 96-272 created the Aid to Families with Dependent Children-Foster Care (AFDC-FC) program by establishing Title IV-E of the Social Security Act (SSA). This entitlement program pays for part of the out-of-home placement costs of eligible children who cannot remain at home due to the risk of abuse or neglect. Title IV-E foster care funds are open-ended and allocated to the state based on the actual costs of eligible children in out-of-home care. Title IV-E foster care funds are restricted in use to the reimbursement of out-of-home board and care costs and may not be used for other program services. In addition, federal eligibility for these funds have been contingent upon eligibility to the means-tested AFDC program.

Federal funding for CWS derives from Title IV-B of the SSA. Title IV-B monies are capped and insufficient to meet the needs of children and families.

The current, rigid program requirements for federal Title IV-E foster care funding have seriously hindered the state's ability to address CWS needs. Since the inception of the foster care program, California has experienced numerous social and economic changes which have altered the needs of children and families served by CWS programs. Not only have the nature and severity of the problems presented by children in need of out-of-home care increased but the population has almost tripled in the 15 years since the program was created.

III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

California's Title IV-E Child Welfare Waiver Demonstration Project consists of three separate components. The Extended Voluntary Placement Component will extend federal funding for voluntary placements from six to twelve months under some circumstances. The Kinship Permanence Component will allow specified adolescent children living in long-term, stable, relative placements to continue receiving a federal foster care payment after guardianship is established and dependency is dismissed. The final component will permit use of Title IV-E funds for innovative service provision in specified conditions. The three components would promote permanence for children and families, divert some children and families from the overwhelmed and often overwhelming juvenile court system, and facilitate movement of foster children to a lesser level of care at no additional cost to the federal, state, or county government. The following are in-depth descriptions of each component.

A. Extended Voluntary Component

Summary:

Participating counties will be able to extend federal voluntary placements from six to as many as twelve months with management review and approval under specified conditions. These changes are expected to reduce both court and casework costs while ensuring that children continue to move towards permanency.

Background:

Federal statute limits foster care payments made to otherwise eligible children placed in foster care pursuant to a voluntary placement agreement to six months. In order to maintain eligibility beyond six months for a child placed pursuant to a voluntary placement agreement, court dependency must be established prior to the 180th day of voluntary placement. A child loses eligibility for foster care benefits if the court does not establish dependency.

The juvenile courts are adversarial systems and the interests of the child and family are often at odds with the goals of the court process. The system can unintentionally interfere with reunification efforts and further traumatize the child and family already experiencing disruption in their lives. Contested cases can also delay the court process which may result in the child spending more time than necessary in out-of-home care. These delays do not necessarily reflect the severity of abuse or the need for court intervention.

Component Description:

This component of the Demonstration Project would expand county options to serve children and families outside the dependency system. As proposed, this component would allow the extension of federal eligibility for voluntary placements from six to twelve months. The extension of a voluntary placement would only be permitted if the county develops and implements a process

which ensures approval by a second level supervisor, administrative review board, or the equivalent at the county level.

Counties will inform parents that the parents may have a "family support person" of their choosing present during the discussion of extended voluntary placements. These family support persons could be relatives, neighbors, friends, teachers, or clergy among others. These family support persons would be volunteer mentors encouraging and supporting families that may feel overwhelmed by the child welfare system. Counties will be encouraged to develop a community-based pool of volunteer family support persons to assist families that can not identify their own support persons.

As envisioned, extended federal voluntary placements will be community-based. These extended placements would be in the child's neighborhood and close to his or her parents' home whenever possible.

Participating counties will select between two options for the implementation of this project: 1) cases will be identified as not requiring court intervention and no petition will be filed with the juvenile court; or 2) an initial petition will be filed with the juvenile court and a formal court diversion process will be ordered.

At the end of the twelve month period spent in voluntary placement, the child could return home or a dependency could be established and the child maintained in out-of-home care.

This component of the Demonstration Project will reduce court costs and ensure that children continue to move toward permanency; remove some children from the adversarial juvenile court system when the family and child would not benefit from such an interdiction; and reduce the length of time in out-of-home care. It will also provide the child and family with a less traumatic experience as the court process can often be intimidating to both adults and young children.

Participant Criteria:

Counties participating in this component of the Demonstration Project will select children and families for inclusion in the extended voluntary project using criteria developed by a state-county work group. At a minimum, those criteria include:

- Cooperative parent(s) and voluntary participation;
- A determination in the services plan that there is a substantial probability of safe return home within the extended voluntary placement period; and

relative accepts a guardianship, as encouraged by law, and dependency is dismissed, they are financially disadvantaged.

Component Description:

This component of the Demonstration Project would establish a pilot project to test and evaluate an alternative means of supporting long-term, stable, relative placements for adolescents.

Dependent foster children over the age of 13 receiving federal foster care payments who have been living in a long-term, stable placement with a relative for not less than one year after a permanency planning hearing will be eligible to this program. Relatives would be nominated by the county, but participation would be voluntary on the part of the relative.

All children will be assessed for adoption and adoption will be discussed with all appropriate relative providers prior to consideration for participation in this project. In addition, the relative will be informed that at any point during the five year pilot, they may apply to adopt the child.

The children will continue to receive the basic foster care payment rate for the duration of the Demonstration Project and continue to be eligible for Medi-Cal/Medicaid. At the termination of the Demonstration Project, all of the participant children will have emancipated from foster care.

No children will be eligible to enter the project after the thirty-sixth month of the project thus enabling each participating child to have two full years in guardianship prior to termination of the project.

The participating relative will be required to sign a "long-term kinship care agreement" which specifies the details of the arrangement. The agreement document will be developed by the counties and subject to CDSS review and approval. After the relative and county sign the agreement, custody or guardianship will be given to the relative caretaker to ensure that the caretaker relative has adequate legal protection and consent authority and the dependency will be dismissed.

Kinship Care Agreement:

The long-term kinship care agreement shall delineate relative and county responsibilities. At a minimum, the agreement shall contain the following:

- A clear statement that there will be no continued court or social services agency involvement in the case unless the child is eligible for and elects to participate in the Independent Living Program (ILP).
- A clear explanation of any changes in grant amount (i.e., loss of specialized care or clothing allowance).
- A brief summary of the pilot project and an explanation of what will happen at the end of the five year pilot period including an explanation of the financial ramifications.

- An explanation of the significance of the relative moving out-of-county or out-of-state.
- A clear statement as to the relatives' responsibilities to inform the county of any changes in circumstances, including a decision to move or terminate the guardianship.
- An explanation of the relative/child's eligibility for ILP Services upon the child's sixteenth birthday.
- A clear statement that relatives maintain the option of adopting the child at any point during the pilot project.
- Provision for continued sibling visitations when siblings are not placed together.
- An explanation of who the relative provider should call at the county if in need of child welfare services.

Participant Criteria:

Only children 13 and older in long-term, stable, relative placements will be eligible for selection and participation in the first year of the Demonstration Project. All children who enter the project in subsequent years must be old enough to age out of the system prior to the termination of the demonstration project. Selection will require second level supervisory approval, approval by an administrative review panel, or the equivalent at the county level.

Participation in the project will be limited to children and families that meet the following criteria:

- the court has decided that the child will not be adopted or has a significant parental relationship that precludes termination of parental rights;
- the family and child are willing to participate in the project;
- the child has been in placement for at least one year following the initial permanency planning hearing and has been placed with this relative for at least one year following a permanency planning hearing;
- the child has no ongoing needs beyond basic necessities or no longer requires funding for child welfare services (i.e., therapy is paid through insurance);
- the relative provider is able to use or is utilizing community resources to meet the needs of the child and has agreed to continue maintaining those services (i.e., community counseling center, nurse practitioners, mental health department);
- the child and relative provider have had a written assessment prepared documenting the appropriateness of their participation in this project;

- the child and relative provider have had a guardianship or custody home study completed, citing the best interests of the child and that there are no protection issues regarding the care of the child;
- the relative provider is capable of taking care of the child, has planned for a successor guardianship in case of their inability to care for the child, and can meet the child's needs (i.e., mental health, educational).

Outcome Measures:

- Reduce court caseload and/or costs.
- Increase level of legal permanence for children in relative care.
- Reduce or maintain recidivism rate of target population so that it is not higher than that of the general foster care population.
- Reduce the number of children with relatives in long-term foster care caseload.
- Increase or maintain levels of child safety in the target populations.
- Achieve high levels of client satisfaction.

C. Intensive Services Component

Summary:

Participating counties will be permitted to use Title IV-E funds for service costs necessary to reduce out-of-home placements and/or divert children in placement to permanent, family settings.

Background:

The prohibition on the use of Title IV-E funds for service provision has seriously hindered the state's ability to address CWS needs. The existing Title IV-E foster care program funding structures do not provide the flexibility needed by state and local governments to address these changing program needs; they serve instead to limit options in the administration of CWS programs, prohibiting funds for implementation of programs which promote family reunification and permanency options for children to better meet family needs. Such restrictions on the use of Title IV-E funds can lead to out-of-home placements for lack of appropriate service options. Entitlement funding, currently available for children in out-of-home care, might better meet the needs of children and families if also made available for services to children in the home.

The existing funding structures penalize counties for achieving desirable program outcomes because savings from reductions in foster care placements cannot be reinvested in program improvements and enhancements under the current system. Title IV-E funding is based solely on the number of children in foster care. If a county's preventive services are effective and fewer

children enter or stay in the foster care system, the county's Title IV-E funding will be reduced. The county is penalized for reducing foster care placements even though such reduction is the most desirable outcome and the number of families requiring services continues to increase.

Without the ability to reinvest funds in the front end of the system to provide preventive, supportive, early intervention services, no state can sustain reductions in foster care placements.

Component Description:

Through the use of federal waivers, this component will allow selected counties to provide intensive, individualized services in a flexible and innovative manner to identified children and families, using Title IV-E funds, thereby permitting additional children to remain in the home or be placed in lower levels of care than would otherwise be possible. This kind of flexibility can be utilized by participating counties to provide a wide range of service options for children and families.

This component will provide an opportunity to measure whether or not counties can achieve better results for children and families by providing individualized services with Title IV-E funds. Counties will be able to demonstrate the value of flexible federal funding for the provision of individualized services based on local considerations which effectively respond to the needs of specific families and target populations.

The services provided by the counties may vary depending on the target populations they choose to serve, the resources available to and created by the counties, and the assessments by both the agency and the community as to what will best meet the needs of the targeted populations. All services provided under this Demonstration Project will be based on the following core principles:

- Services will be delivered in the neighborhood or area where the child and his/her family or substitute family reside and will access all essential community resources.
- Flexible service methods will be utilized to ensure that family's concerns, priorities and resources are evident in the design and assessment of service delivery thereby providing families with the necessary problem solving skills to apply independently in new situations.
- Type and intensity of services will be based on comprehensive, strength-based family assessments addressing client-identified immediate needs, as well as underlying risk factors contributing to problems which are more pervasive or recurrent in nature.
- Services will be individualized to meet the unique needs of each child and family member. These services may be both traditional (therapy; transportation; housing assistance; respite; etc.) and non-traditional (whole family foster care; school attendance aides; special recreational, developmental, and tutorial services; peer support; family mentoring; etc.).
- Services will be culturally competent, incorporating the religious, regional, racial and ethnic values and beliefs of the family and delivered in a manner which meets as many of the child and family's life domain areas as possible.

- Services offered will be cost effective utilizing community services in tandem with a flexible funding mechanism which allows for the diverse use of existing categorical monies.
- Provision of services will result in clear, case specific outcomes which can be monitored and measured.

In order for these services to be most effective, counties, communities and the individuals most affected by the services available must provide input in both defining service needs and constructing and implementing a service delivery strategy that meets both the requirements of this proposal and the needs of the children and families to be served. In this way, services can be easily accessed and more effective in reducing abuse and neglect of children.

Service delivery will emphasize a comprehensive and integrated approach to the provision of services to children and families, based on the recognition that service fragmentation is a major barrier to reaching and serving these groups effectively.

It will be necessary for counties to describe how services will be coordinated at the county level and to provide a specific discussion about how providers and resources will be accessed within the community. Priority consideration will be given to county plans that emphasize creation of private/public partnerships; utilization of community based service providers; and integration of service sectors.

Intensive Support Services:

The philosophy of Intensive Support Services is representative of individualized service delivery that enhances families' skills and confidence in utilizing and developing their own support structure and is particularly well suited to the overall principles of the Demonstration Project. Accordingly, it is being presented here as the service delivery philosophy of choice and priority will be given to those counties that embrace this ideology to deliver services.

Intensive Support Services provide individualized supportive services for children and families with multiple and complex needs. Utilizing a strengths-based approach, an assessment of the child and family's internal and external resources acknowledges that each member of the family has unique talents and skills. These aptitudes and abilities coupled together with the resilient capacity of children and families, when coordinated with outside support, form the nucleus of positive change and adaptation. Strengths, not pathologies, empower families to overcome the crises and barriers that they face.

A basic tenet of Intensive Support Services is that it is preferable for children to grow up in a family setting in their own community. Thus, assistance is provided in the homes and communities in which the families live. Creative use of services indigenous to the community are the primary response to address family needs. Communities are viewed as a resource and are responsible to guide and shape the formation of existing and additional services. Through a sense of family and community "ownership" of service delivery, cultural specific needs of families will be met in an appropriate manner.

In an effort to maintain consistency, stability and safety for the child, services are provided within the most normalized environment available. The continuum of services offered to children and families must be vast. Intensive Support Services utilize a myriad of combinations of traditional (therapy, parenting education, case management, assessment and referral) and non-traditional (parent peer support, respite care, home visiting, tutoring, and recreation/social activities) services to produce a customized service milieu to meet the distinctive needs of the child and family. Families are viewed as equal partners in the creation of the service plan.

Acknowledging both developmental and ecological components, this philosophy recognizes that set-backs, crisis and failures are part of the human experience. These hurdles can be expected, planned for and mitigated by coordinating appropriate service delivery, resources and time frames. Services, specifically designed for the individual family, both traditional and non-traditional, can be added as required to enable them to achieve their mutually determined goals.

Intensive Support Services preserve a commitment to serve each child and family on an individual basis and to provide services toward successfully achieving the goal of self-sufficiency. This philosophy provides that children are not found to be ineligible based on the severity of their needs or punitively discharged when treatment plans are not successful. Services can be reconfigured to meet crises and changing needs rather than referring children elsewhere within the system of care for services.

This philosophy is inclusive of many familiar service delivery designs--"WrapAround," "Multi-systemic Therapy," "Family Preservation and Support Services"--while allowing for other service strategies to be developed that espouse the need for client/family driven, flexible and comprehensive services. Such services will address issues related to significant life domains such as: basic needs (shelter/food/safety), emotional/social, medical, legal, educational/vocational and cultural needs. With provision of flexible funds, services can envelop and support the child and family rather than requiring that they fit into existing programs predetermined by funding as opposed to need.

Family Decision Making Model:

A number of counties have expressed an interest in providing services within the context of a Family Decision Making Model, also known as Family Unity or Family Conferencing Models. This would be an appropriate option for counties to choose and would provide an opportunity to test a different service delivery model and its effects on the quality of service planning and delivery. Counties selecting this model may utilize IV-E funds to purchase the services of a professional facilitator and other support services as needed to assist in organizing the family conference meeting.

The Family Decision Making Model is a solution based approach to resolving problems for children and families. This model draws on the extended families' strengths and resources, the strengths of the system and the strengths of other community agencies and individuals involved in the child's life. The main goal of this model is to strengthen individual families in order to provide long-term solutions to family problems and promote safety of children.

The foundation of this model is based on a number of values and beliefs. Primary among them is the belief that families have strengths and can change and that strengths are what ultimately resolve issues of concern. Strengths are discovered through listening, noticing and paying attention to people and they are enhanced when they are acknowledged and encouraged. People gain a sense of hope when they are listened to and they are more inclined to listen to others if they themselves are listened to. Whereas advice can seem disrespectful, listening and suggesting options provides choices and choices empower people. Rather than a boss who becomes one more person with needs to be met, a consultant role will be more conducive to achieving the goals based on these values and beliefs.

The Family Decision Making Model focuses on issues of concern rather than problems. "Problems" tend to imply blame and guilt and result in erecting a barrier that leads to resistance, anxiety, fear, anger, embarrassment or reluctance. Looking for problems prevents a recognition of what is "right" about someone and increases the tendency to label people. It invites defensiveness, hostility, denial and excuse making and does not result in productive outcomes. The terminology utilized when looking at issues of concern sets up a cooperative, team approach that encourages ownership.

The model is based on the family meeting, a specific tool utilized to find and build on a family's resources for the protection of children. Family is defined as birth family, extended family, and other individuals who are close to the child or interested in the child's well-being. The purpose of the meeting is to help the family, in part by giving them specific opportunities to share their best thinking about finding solutions and by bringing together their support systems to help in seeking solutions. A fundamental premise of family meetings is that families should be *given* responsibility, and should *take* responsibility, for creating a plan that will ensure their children's safety and keep their family intact.

The family meeting is arranged by a facilitator. The facilitator may be a family therapist, a case manager, or a family service provider who can foster a sense of empowerment within the family. The facilitator should be familiar with the array of programs/services that are readily available in the community, close to the family's home, and in settings which are non-threatening to the family. The facilitator assists the family in identifying individuals who are important in their child's life to invite to the family meetings. Participants may include friends, relatives, neighbors, clergy, or anyone in a position of support to the family. This extended family group serves as the decision-making body, discussing safety concerns and sharing ideas for enhancing family functioning. Participants identify family resources which serve as the foundation for potential solutions and work together to craft a plan which targets desired improvements.

Family meetings are led by a mutually agreed upon member of the extended family group. This person is responsible for ensuring that pertinent safety issues are understood by the group and that options for protection of the child are identified. The format of family meetings generally include some or all of the following elements: 1) an introduction of all persons present, including an explanation of their role in the meeting; 2) a review of the purpose and objectives of the meeting; 3) a discussion of issues of concern to the family and agency; 4) an assessment of the family resources which may aid in solutions; 5) a review of options the family has considered in addressing concerns; 6) the identification of additional options or ideas by other participants; and

7) a determination of the best plan of action for the family, including time lines and individual/agency responsibilities for carrying out the plan. The family provides the proposed plan to the facilitator who reviews the proposal to ensure that it is reasonable and provides protection and care for the child(ren). Additional family decision-making meetings may occur if revisions or enhancements to the plan are needed. The final step in the approval of the family plan occurs when the facilitator synthesizes the agreement into a document which outlines individual responsibilities for accomplishing identified tasks.

The outline which establishes tasks and services to be performed serves several functions in the Family Decision Making Model. It provides a plan with tasks that all participants have agreed to. It extends the circle of people who are involved in the child's life and creates a partnership of people who agree to help and who have the same basic goals. The outline also helps to visually coordinate services so that participants can see who is doing what and when and provides a tool for monitoring the completion of tasks. It also provides a visual way to monitor services and obligations to prevent overloading the family. The ultimate purpose of the outline and the completion of the tasks is to provide safety for the child.

The Family Decision Making Model can be used for either keeping families together or for reuniting families. Because this model emphasizes the strengths and resources of individual families, it provides an opportunity to empower family members while at the same time utilizing untapped resources for maintaining the family unit and the child's safety.

Target Populations:

A work group of CDSS and county representatives has identified three target populations to receive the flexible and innovative services that are possible through this component of the Demonstration Project.

- Children who would otherwise be removed from the home (the county must document that without the intensive services, the child would have been placed into a specific level of care).
- Children who could be moved home or to another permanent placement with a relative, guardian or pre-adoptive family.
- Children in care who would otherwise move laterally or to a higher level of care.

All references to "home" made in the target population descriptions, as well as elsewhere in this document, are meant to include the home of the birth family, a relative home, a foster family home that is considered a long term placement or a pre-adoptive or adoptive home. The intention here is to ensure the least restrictive, most permanent placement possible. In evaluating county proposals, the CDSS will give priority consideration to those plans which ensure permanence for children.

The target populations are specific and include only children who would otherwise be receiving a higher level of care and/or a change in placement. Counties may choose to provide services to one or more of the populations identified above. In order to ensure that each of the targeted populations served by each of the participating counties consists of a significant yet manageable number of cases, counties will be required to select a certain percentage or number of children to work with, within a minimum and maximum range.

Related Issues:

In selecting the service delivery approach that they will utilize to implement program change, it will be necessary for counties to describe in detail how their program meets the requirements of the Demonstration Project in providing intensive, individualized services to children and families in the most permanent setting available and within the child's community. Program proposals will be based on the core principles previously outlined in this document.

After approval of county plans and selection of participant counties, consortia will be established so that counties can share knowledge and ideas, including experience with any existing county programs which provide intensive, individualized services. For some counties, the Demonstration Project will provide an opportunity to eliminate barriers to existing services and expand existing programs.

In order to achieve the goal of maintaining children in the lowest level of care that best meets their needs, it will be necessary for counties to access a broad range of existing services as well as creating additional services based on the individual needs of each child and family. It will be necessary for private and public service systems to come together to deliver a broad range of services at the home and community level. It will be necessary for these services to be funded with Title IV-E dollars. Only child welfare services that pertain to the individual case will be eligible for such funding; the funds can be utilized for the purchase of services to meet the case plan goals of the targeted children and families.

As noted above, priority consideration will be given to plans which emphasize creation of private/public partnerships, utilization of community based service providers, and integration of service sectors. Therefore, it is not envisioned that these funds will be utilized for the costs of county service staff unless certain assurances are incorporated into the county plan. These assurances could include union agreements which provide for flexible funding and staffing and a description of the relative costs and benefits of using county staff versus contract staff. The lack of contract providers in the community may also be considered. The CDSS recognizes that the success of this component will depend on the creative and innovative concepts each county brings to the project.

Title IV-E dollars will not be used for services which are available through other funding sources such as mental health, education or other resources in the community. However, if a specific service which is funded through another source is not available in the community, funds can be used to access that resource elsewhere. The CDSS will give priority to county proposals which outline in detail their plan for maximizing all available resources and funding streams.

Outcome Measures:

The following outcome measures will be utilized to evaluate the results of this waiver component.

The outcome measures below apply to all three identified target populations:

- Decrease the proportion of young children (under 13) placed in group homes.
- Decrease the number of placement changes for individual children.
- Out-of-home care costs plus service costs will not exceed Demonstration Project projected costs.
- Achieve high levels of client satisfaction.
- Increase or maintain levels of child safety in the target populations.

In addition, the following outcome measures will be utilized with the target populations to which they can be linked:

- Increase the proportion of children in less restrictive, family settings (e.g., otherwise removed, re-entry reduction, higher to lower level). Increase the number of children moved from non-relative to relative placements.
- Decrease length of stay between entry into out-of-home placement and permanence.
- Decrease the length of stay in foster care.
- Reduce recidivism rates for the target populations; subsequent child abuse reports; and re-entry to foster care and placement at a higher level of care.
- Reduce the number of children who are moved from a less restrictive to a more restrictive placement.

IV. LEVEL OF COUNTY PARTICIPATION

The CDSS may approve as many as 32 county projects in the first year of the Demonstration Project. Following is a breakdown of anticipated participation. The three pilot projects will not necessarily operate in the same counties.

Extended Voluntary Component

The CDSS will limit the number of counties participating in this component to a maximum of 10 the first year of the demonstration. However, the CDSS may choose to include additional counties and children as the project progresses if warranted by the project's success and as funds permit.

The CDSS believes there are a small number of children in out-of-home care who could be better served under an extended voluntary placement agreement. The number of participating children in this component will not exceed 500 over the 5 years of the project.

Kinship Permanence Component

California statute provides that the Kinship Permanence Component would be limited to five counties: Alameda, Contra Costa, Sacramento, Solano, and Tulare. However, the CDSS may include additional counties and children as the project progresses and funds permit.

Approximately 1400 children would be eligible to participate in this component in the first year.

The Governor recently signed Assembly Bill 317 (Chapter 258, Statutes of 1997) which adds Sacramento County to this pilot project; numbers of participating children are not yet available for this county. In addition, the bill would allow CDSS to choose other counties interested in participation.

Services Component

California has 58 counties. The largest eleven account for approximately 83% of the total foster care population in California. They have foster care caseloads of 2,500 or more children. California has fifteen medium size counties which have caseloads between 450 and 2500 children. The medium size counties account for approximately 12% of the total foster care population in California. California has 32 small counties which have caseloads of less than 450 children. The small counties account for approximately 5% of the total foster care population in California. There were approximately 105,000 children in out-of-home care in California as of June 1, 1997.

The CDSS will limit participation in the services component to a maximum of 12 counties the first year of the demonstration. This number will consist of approximately five large counties (foster care caseloads of 2500 or more), five medium counties (foster care caseloads of 450 to 2500), and a maximum of two small counties (foster care caseloads smaller than 450).

The CDSS intends to limit the number of cases as follows: 200 per county in up to five large participating counties; 125 per county in up to five medium participating counties; and 20 per county in up to two small participating counties. In this way, participating counties will be able to target approximately 5% of their foster care population for participation in the intensive services component. Accordingly, the maximum number of children participating in the first year of this component will be approximately 1,665. The CDSS may include more counties and children as the project progresses if warranted by success of the project and funds permit.

V. EVALUATION DESIGN

A quasi-experimental design utilizing comparison counties will be used to evaluate hypotheses in the Extended Voluntary Component. Participating demonstration counties will be matched to comparison control counties based on organizational structure for delivery of child welfare services, current performance on outcomes, costs and community factors within those counties.

A true experimental design, utilizing random assignment of children, will be used to evaluate hypotheses in both the Kinship Permanence and Intensive Services components. In each

participating county, a single research sample will be used, and the hypotheses will be constructed to assess the impact of the demonstration on the entire sample. However, subgroup analysis will be conducted at each site to provide a more complete understanding of program effects.

Beginning with the date of implementation, all eligible children would be subject to random assignment to the control or experimental group in the Kinship Care component. Under the Intensive Services component, both new cases and cases already open will be randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups if eligible. Random assignment of the new cases will continue for the first three years of the Kinship Permanence component and through the five years of the Intensive Services demonstration.

All cases assigned to either the experimental or control treatment groups will maintain their assigned status for the full period of the demonstration as long as they reside in California.

The evaluation design must include three different analyses: an Impact Study, a Process Study, and a Cost Benefit/Cost Neutrality Analysis.